

REPORT/RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
OF SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA  
AND RECORD OF ACTION

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June 22, 2004

**FROM:** MICHAEL E. HAYS, Director  
Land Use Services Department/Advance Planning Division

**SUBJECT:** VISION STATEMENT FOR THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

**RECOMMENDATION:** **APPROVE** the Vision Statement prepared by the General Plan Advisory Committee, as revised by the Planning Commission, for use in the County General Plan Update.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:** One of the first major tasks of the General Plan Update program approved by the Board of Supervisors in May 2003 is to establish a Vision Statement to guide the review and update of General Plan policies. Creation of a Vision Statement with extensive public involvement was one of the primary recommendations of the Phase I evaluation of the existing General Plan that was used to determine the scope of the General Plan Update. The General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC), a 15-member panel of citizens appointed by the Board to assist with the General Plan Update, was responsible for preparing the Vision Statement in cooperation with County staff and the General Plan consultant team, including MIG and URS Corporation. The GPAC assembled a Vision Statement that represents a summary of predominant comments received through various forms of public outreach.

Two series of community meetings were held at locations throughout the County to obtain input from the public on the appropriate vision for the future of San Bernardino County. A total of 24 meetings were held. Total attendance for all meetings exceeded 700 people. The first round of meetings was conducted in late summer 2003, at 13 locations, including communities as widespread as Trona, Baker, and Needles. In these meetings, public comments were collected regarding what people like about the County and the communities they live in, what they are concerned about for the future, and how they might like to see things change. This initial public outreach was augmented by a Vision Survey. Nearly 200 volunteer "Vision Leaders" were recruited and trained to collect public input on the Vision Statement from organizations and community groups through a brief survey. The survey was also available for individuals to complete on-line, through the General Plan Update web site: [www.sbcountygeneralplan.net](http://www.sbcountygeneralplan.net). The Vision Survey yielded thousands of public comments. Approximately 20 interviews with key stakeholders, including Board members, developers, and environmental groups also contributed to the Vision Statement.

The GPAC prepared the first Draft Vision Statement based on public comments received through all forms of public outreach during the fall, through the end of 2003. In January 2004, approximately 3,000 newsletters presenting the Draft Vision Statement were mailed to County residents, distributed at community meetings, and handed out at County offices. In February and March 2004, 11 community meetings were held, primarily in locations where community plans will be prepared. In this second round of community meetings, the Draft Vision Statement was presented for validation and additional public comment. Initial public input on the community plans was also collected in the second round of meetings. In all, the GPAC considered thousands of comments from the public before submitting a final Draft Vision Statement for review by the Planning Commission and approval by the Board of Supervisors.

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On May 6, 2004, the Planning Commission reviewed and recommended approval of the Draft Vision Statement prepared by the GPAC, with one revision to delete a bullet point related to off-highway vehicle recreation. Over 1,400 notices of the Planning Commission meeting were mailed to individuals who have participated in the visioning process by attending community meetings, completing the Vision Survey, or indicating interest by asking to be included on a mailing list for the General Plan Update. The notice contained information needed to view the final Draft Vision Statement on-line, or to contact staff for a hard copy. Only 17 individuals actually attended the Planning Commission hearing to comment on the Vision Statement. Some of the comments were focused on code enforcement and other specific land use issues not relevant to the Vision Statement. Several people commented on the issues of off-highway vehicle recreation and access to public lands. These individuals expressed concerns about the Vision Statement encouraging off-highway vehicles in the mountain and desert areas. Many of the comments made at the Planning Commission hearing mirrored competing sentiments voiced in the community meetings, with some favoring increased access to public lands, while others favored controlling public access to protect sensitive habitats and wilderness areas. A few speakers also recommended adding a new bullet point about preservation of open space.

Following the public testimony, the Planning Commission deliberations focused on several aspects of the Vision Statement. One Commissioner noted that the statement was somewhat lengthy, and that some of the points may be too specific, going beyond the scope of a vision statement. Another Commissioner felt that the importance of open space was not properly emphasized and that the topics of watershed management and preservation of historic and cultural resources should also be added. The Planning Commission concluded the hearing with a vote of 4-1, to recommend approval of the Vision Statement as crafted by the GPAC, except that the bullet point regarding off-highway vehicle recreation should be deleted. The dissenting Commissioner favored continuing the item for further review and revision of the Vision Statement before making a recommendation to the Board. After the Planning Commission hearing, letters reflecting the same comments addressed in public testimony to the Planning Commission have been submitted to staff and are on file in the Land Use Services Department.

Staff recommends that the Board of Supervisors approve the Vision Statement submitted by the General Plan Advisory Committee, as revised by the Planning Commission, to be used as a guide in the General Plan Update, representing the citizens' vision for the future of San Bernardino County.

Status of the General Plan Update: The Vision Statement is the first finished product of the General Plan Update to be presented for review by the Board of Supervisors. It represents the culmination of many months of public outreach and summarizes the opinions of hundreds of County residents. In addition to preparation of the Vision Statement, many other major tasks of the General Plan Update have been initiated in the past year. The following is a summary of completed tasks and immediate next steps for the work in progress:

- **Background Reports:** Technical background reports for all eight elements of the General Plan have been prepared and submitted for review by staff. The background reports describe current conditions and will function as a technical foundation for the General Plan, as well as the existing setting information for the General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR).  
**Next Steps:** The General Plan Technical Committee (GPTC), comprised of County staff from various departments involved in land development, as well as representatives from San Bernardino Associated Governments (SANBAG) and the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), will review and validate the background reports.

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- **Development Code:** Initial analysis of the organization and content of the Development Code has been completed, and numerous recommendations for improvement have been identified. Any General Plan policies that are added or revised during the update will be evaluated to determine whether implementation will require revision of the Development Code.  
**Next Steps:** Interested citizens and developers identified in the public outreach program will be invited to participate with the County Development Review Committee (DRC) in a review and update of rural development standards for the desert region of the County.
- **Community Plans:** Part of the time spent in community meetings convened to work on the Vision Statement for the General Plan served a dual purpose in areas where community plans will be prepared. Initial public input was collected on the community character and goals residents want to emphasize in their community plans.  
**Next Steps:** Meetings will be scheduled in each community plan area to continue work on the community plans. These meetings will be working sessions, utilized to obtain feedback on preliminary plan outlines and to refine the initial identification of local land use issues.
- **Sphere of Influence Studies:** A comparative analysis of City and County land use plans has been prepared for the sphere of influence of each city that has an unincorporated sphere of influence. These studies will be used to identify potential land use conflicts to review with the cities and present to the Board for policy direction.  
**Next Steps:** Meetings will be scheduled with city planners in affected cities to review the comparison data and discuss potential conflicts between City and County land use plans and development standards. Problem areas will be identified for the Board in conjunction with the review of County land use policies for sphere of influence areas.

The General Plan Update is proceeding according to the schedule and budget approved by the Board in May 2003. Staff will report to the Board periodically with status updates, and will present data for consideration and policy direction as needed.

**REVIEW AND APPROVAL BY OTHERS:** This item was reviewed and approved by Deputy County Counsel Robin Cochran (387-8957) on June 3, 2004, and by the County Administrative Office, Patricia M. Cole, Administrative Analyst III (387-5346) on June 4, 2004.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** There are no financial impacts associated with approval of the Vision Statement. It is one of many activities authorized under the General Plan Update work program.

**SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT(S):** All

**PRESENTER:** Michael E. Hays, Director, Land Use Services Department, 387-4141.

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